

AN
ORATION
DELIVERED AT
ROCHESTER;
ON THE
FOURTH OF JULY,

SEVENTEEN HUNDRED NINETY FOUR.

THEY fought FAIR FREEDOM in a foreign soil,
The pleasure lessen'd the attending toil.

ADDISON.

BY JOSEPH CLARK, Esq.

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THE PLANNED - 41

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ERRATA.

In the 4th page, 2d line for peasant and affluent read, peasant and the affluent. 18th line, for her, read his.— 5th page, 26th line, for electric fire fluid, read electric fluid. 6th page 8th line, for now, read nor. 17th line, of Indies, read, of the Indus. 9th page, 7th line, for agreeable, read agreeably.

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AN
ORATION, &c.

TO celebrate the Monarch's Fame is the Poet-Laureat's task—To record the rise and fall of Empires is the peculiar province of the historian—but to immortalize in anniversary commemorations the emancipation of a people from the shackles of slavery, is the far more grateful employment of a freeman. The orators of old might dazzle with the splendor of diction, and the populace kiss their chains oiled with the harmony of words. Demosthenes, in philippic strains, might rouse the Greeks to arms, and Cicero, in diffusive language, add a temporary fuel to liberty within the walls of Rome.

But Liberty, established on the broad basis of independence, and the peoples' virtue needs not the aid of sweet flowing periods, nor hidden remedies concealed in gilded pills. Undeceiving experience realizes the substance from the shadow, and discriminates between the Phantom and Fruition. She mingles

herself through the whole body of the people, and her right hand is equally embraced by the Peasant and affluent. She wants not the venal stile of the sycophant, to proclaim her value, nor pens dipt in wisdom to enhance her worth.

The illusive pen of venality, to calm the breast of oppression, finds no place with her ; neither does she worship affliction, through the *mirror* of deception. Whilst the courtier in despotic governments, to please his prince, tortures truth and language, and philosophizes oppression into system, and the venal writer to cast a shade over the misery of his fellow mortals, tells them in all the gravity of aristocratic eloquence, that happiness is theirs. Whilst slave is made accessory to the oppression of his fellow slave, and all tread together the same round of misery and despair. The Free man possesses, in actual enjoyment, what the slave knows but in idea, the whole extent of her eloquence is embraced in this expression, *I am free!*

The unity of truth needs not the circumlocution of language to prove its existence ; it is incapable of alloy. The gay stile of tyrants with all its gaudy attire must give place to the chaste stile of democratic simplicity ; and whilst the mind of genius is labouring to prove unexisting felicity, and consoling shadows into substance ; the free man with less expence of truth and virtue, enjoys the prize, the other fails to obtain.

It is my part, this day, to lead in this place the celebration of that event which ought to be recorded in letters of gold not only on each American breast, but

likewise on the breast of every friend to humanity--
The declaration of the Independence of the United States of America ! An event which will redound to the benefit of unborn millions ! an event which future ages will sanctify with festive oblations, and for which they will have most abundant reason to bless those who first embarked in that cause which gave birth to it.

On the fourth of July 1776, the American Congress declared these states free and independent, and totally absolved them from all allegiance to the British crown. The effects arising from this severance of connection with the British empire, we have now had eighteen years experience ; the event has amply proved the utility of the measure, and the wisdom of those who adopted it.

This famous declaration, which emancipated three millions of people from the hand of tyranny and oppression, has been annually celebrated in this country with festivity and joy.

But the occasion which gives rise to these general displays of festivity and congratulation, is not confined solely to this western world. We see the sacred principles of Liberty and the Rights of Man, expanding far and wide, their benign influences ; and catching like electric fire fluid, among the long oppressed inhabitants of the European nations. Already has the fair goddess of Liberty erected her standard in France, and twenty five millions, in holy devotion, have bow'd the knee to her sacred shrine. This benign friend of

the human race, like the latent fire of enthusiasm is now making the most rapid strides in those countries which for ages have been grovelling under the dark clouds of despotism.

Nor will she stop her career till she has brought all her enemies under her feet. Thus shall the offspring become instructors of wisdom to their parents.

Now will the genius of Liberty, if I may be indulged a prophetic idea, be confined within the narrow bounds of Europe; her influences, are as pervading as the solar rays, and her resources as inexhaustable as infinite goodness.

Having erected and established her standard in the European world, she crosses the Helispont to give Liberty to Asia. Thither waving her inviting Banner, till the Rights of Man ride triumphant on the Banks of Indies, and Africa in her turn experiences the happy influences of her power, germinating in her soil. However phantastic, the accomplishment of these events, may be, to the mind of the sceptic, they will ever be the ardent wishes of that benevolence, which is exercised in diffusing some share of its own felicity. Of that humanity, which ever ought to characterize a reasonable Being.

But let us return from these ideal contemplations of foreign Countries, to what passes, and is lively exhibited in our own. It is here that we behold the blessings arising from Freedom and Independence. It is here that we behold, almost exclusively exercised the birth-Right of Man. A government which is the legitimate offspring of the peoples' will, as equal,

ly remote from Licentiousness on the one hand, as from tyranny on the other. A government, the result of wisdom, founded in justice and as sacred as virtue. It is here in this land of Liberty and Freedom, that we have the most abundant testimony from experience, that man is capable of governing himself; a position which the sages of old acknowledge to be beautiful in theory, but denied its reducibility to practice.

In the present unhappy disturbances in Europe, and the convulsions which have lately distracted that part of the world, the wisdom of our government, and the blessings of our Independence, have been singularly manifested. Although our local situation naturally detaches us from the vortex of European politics, yet we must inevitably have been involved therein, had it not been for our Independence. Although every effort has been made, which invention could suggest, not only by European emissaries, but by internal enemies of our government, to plunge us into this transatlantic war, and as the grossest violations of the principles of neutrality, which it has been the policy of this country, to observe, have been practised yet we have hitherto, happily escaped that misfortune. Whoever will cast his eye upon the history of Europe, for two Centuries past, will find that there has been an actual existing war in that country for nearly one half of the time during that period, and which has, indeed, not been confined to one or two Nations, but has commonly embraced in its consequences, most of the European powers. In fact, the present man-

archical governments in that country, are so complex and intricate, chief executive powers, so attached to each other, by family compacts and the ties of consanguinity, that it amounts almost to a total Destruction of Independence among them, so that it would seem upon the Principles of the present complicated system of Politics in Europe, that the millions of that beautiful country, are destined by nature, to be the abject slaves of a few crowned heads. They would like the ancient Egyptian tyrant, shake the reins of oppression over the head of their fellow mortals, harnessed to the chariot.

The principles of slavery seem to have been so incorporated in the constitution, the mind so accustomed to vassalage, and the understanding so cramped by oppression, that human nature seems to have forgotten its original dignity. The French nation in their late and present struggles for liberty seem to have vibrated to the opposite extreme. From excess of Despotism, they appear to be plunging themselves into the gulph of Anarchy—An evil infinitely worse than the most absolute Tyranny.

It may be doubted, whether there are many Frenchmen in France, who have a true American idea of the Rights of Man; so irregular and so capricious has been the conduct of their National Assembly.

The solution of this political problem, that man is capable of governing and being governed, of diffusing and enjoying happiness, without the intervention of hereditary Lords and Tyrants, is reserved for America—It is to this country that the world is indebted for

the demonstration of this fact, that, though the laws of society can regulate the inheritance of property, it cannot that of the human mind.

That princes and subjects, masters and slaves, were inseparable appendages of human nature was the ancient received opinion, and under the practical influence of this idea, have mankind been subjected for many ages.

But in this enlightened age, we behold mankind assuming their native dignity. The human mind, subjecting itself to the Empire of Reason—We behold each individual freely exercising the disposal of his life, liberty and property, agreeable to the laws.

The doctrine of mine and thine is no longer confined to the uncertain caprice of a despot, but its principles are defined by the permanent laws of our country—If then my fellow citizens, we have been thus highly favoured ; thus distinguished from the other nations of the earth, with the blessings of Independence, with a free, equitable and permanent government ; with the most unlimited exercise of all those rights and privileges, to which we are entitled by the laws of nature and of nature's God ; is there not the widest field open for the display of gratitude ! Ought we not this day in commemoration of that glorious event, to that invisible being, who disposes of affairs according to his will, offer up our tributes of praise and thanksgiving ? Ought we not to consider, wherefore it is, that providence hath been pleased, to make such manifest interpositions in our favour ? That being

without arms, ammunition or money, without friends or allies, without laws, government or discipline, we were enabled to oppose, for a time, the unjust encroachments of one of the mightiest powers in Europe—And finally with subsequent and unforeseen aid, supported in the conflict, till our enemies were compelled to ratify and acknowledge that declaration which we are now celebrating.

And while we are thus improving this opportunity, to celebrate the Independence of our country ; do not our breasts heave with gratitude, and our hearts palpitate with joy, in contrasting the present, with the year seventeen hundred twenty one ; when this town was an uncharter'd forest, and its only inhabitants were beasts of prey ; and for many years afterwards the inhabitants who had settled here, were continually exposed to destruction by the incursions of the Indian savages*—Methinks, I now have in my eye, some of the relatives of those who have severely experienced the effects of their savage barbarity—Whose husbands or wives, parents or children, brothers or sisters have been sacrificed to the shrine of their inhuman cruelty ; it will not be expected that I should enter into a historic deduction of those events, as they are foreign from the design of this days celebration. Those facts, it is probable, are much better known to many of you, than to me. It is sufficient for us that we

* There was actually present at the delivery of this address, the husband of a woman killed by the Indians in the year 1747, with several of her children—Also not only several of the brothers and sisters of four men who were killed the year before, but many of their children.

have no further occasion, to fear their insults, nor dread their vengeance. The husbandman needs not now, his musket as his necessary companion at the plough, nor the garrison for his evening retreat. *His arms may now rest suspended in his house, and with his wife and children he may now sleep in quiet, labour in peace and be happy. I doubt not, on this glorious occasion, that with the female part of this assembly I shall find union of hearts and hands.

You my female friends, in a particular manner, have abundant reason to rejoice ; the delicacy of your persons, and the tyranny of custom, render it far more difficult for you to emigrate from countries groaning under the iron hand of oppression, than it is for us. You will therefore, I presume cordially join in the celebration of this day. Your bosoms will glow with gratitude, and your countenances bloom with joy, in the contemplation of that event, which restores to you, your husbands, your lovers and your friends. The sweetness of your smiles, will alleviate any sufferings we may be called to endure in this fluctuating scene of things, and greatly enhances the felicities of Independence.

As we have now a firm and efficient government, founded on the laws of equality and justice, which is recognized by most of the belligerent Powers of Europe, and which has become the admiration and the envy of the world ; let us not be inattentive to the practice of those moral virtues without which no government can exist ; may we be inspired with holy

zeal in the exercise of benevolence and good will to mankind. As we respect the benefits of liberty and freedom, so let us, with religious devotion, adore that being on whom alone we are dependent. May we never want a disposition to abound in the discharges of public faith and private virtue. May liberty and the rights of man, remain in this country as long as the procreative principles of nature shall exist; and future ages forever hail the day which gave them Independence.

FINIS.

